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STEPHEN F. AUSTIN AND THE INDEPENDENCE OF TEXAS

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The personality of Stephen F. Austin looms large in the history of Anglo-American Texas. During the first decade, while on the one side he smoothed out the real or fancied grievances of the colonists and on the other persuaded the Mexican government against its better judgment to hope for the abiding loyalty of its adoptive citizens, he held the fate of the colonies in the hollow of his hand. And one who studies his carefully preserved correspondence cannot doubt that he fully realized and keenly felt the responsibility, or that his polar star, to use a metaphor of which the men of his day were fond, was always the ultimate good of the colonists. Although he may at times have erred in the means for attaining his end, there is a fine consistency in his aim to subserve, as he understood them, the best interests of the people whom in a peculiar sense he felt to be his own. It is the purpose of this paper to examine his attitude toward the most vital question that Texas ever faced—that, namely, of independence. And from the view point just stated it is not difficult to forecast his position at any given moment.

For the purpose of this examination Austin's career falls into three periods. In the first, which may extend from 1821 to 1832 he perceived the best interest of Texas in unswerving allegiance to Mexico. This happened to be the period in which he was laying

deep the foundation of his colonies, and it was also the time when for various reasons Texas suffered least interference from the general government. The second extends from the middle of 1832 to perhaps the end of 1834; during these years Texas came more into the current of national politics, and loyalty in his mind became conditional upon the organization of Texas as a separate state of the confederation in order to correct in a measure the evils of the federal administration. The third covers the fifteen months or so preceding March 2, 1836, when Santa Anna was destroying the federal system and establishing a centralized government somewhat like that of the consular government of France under Napoleon Bonaparte; Austin now realized that even separate statehood would not protect Texas and mentally advanced to the last step—the declaration of independence.

Passing from generalities to particulars, Austin in the first period showed his loyalty to Mexico and his protective relation to the colonists by his attitude toward the Fredonian Rebellion, Guerrero's emancipation decree of 1829, the law of April 6, 1830, and the troubles of 1832. It will suffice to review these episodes very briefly. In 1825 Hayden Edwards entered into a contract with the government to settle eight hundred families in the district around and including Nacogdoches. There was already there a considerable population, mostly Mexican, and Edwards early incurred the resentment of the old settlers by questioning their land titles; later he had trouble with some of his own colonists who objected to paying the small fee that he charged them for land; finally he became involved in an election dispute at Nacogdoches which the political chief at Bexar decided against him. By October, 1826, feeling against him, and especially against his brother, B. W. Edwards, was so high that the political chief somewhat arbitrarily issued a decree banishing him from the country. He determined to resist, and with a handful of followers declared Texas independent; made an alliance with the Cherokees; and tried to incite Austin's colonists to a race war against the Mexicans. In this last, however, he failed, for Austin not only prevented his colonists from responding but actually caused them to join the Mexican troops in putting down the rebels. Austin then detached the Indians from their alliance and exerted his influence to

secure an amnesty for all who laid down their arms, so that by the last of January, 1827, Edwards fled across the border and the Fredonian Rebellion, as it was called, was over.¹ Austin's part was an important one. He gave Edwards sage advice which, if he had followed it, would have enabled him to avoid most of his trouble; and in the end took the only possible course to preserve the confidence of the government and the interests of the colonists.

On September 15, 1829, President Guerrero issued a decree emancipating all the slaves in the Mexican Republic, and it fell with the presage of ruin upon the Texans who, with no free labor to be obtained, felt that slaves were absolutely essential to the opening up of their new-land farms. Through Austin's influence the political chief at Bexar suspended the official publication of the proclamation until a memorial could be forwarded to Mexico praying for relief. In this petition the political chief and the governor of the state both joined, and on December 2, 1829, the general government was pleased to issue a second decree exempting Texas from the operation of the first. Austin's steadiness had prevented the colonists from hurrying into precipitate action; but he realized as clearly as they the effect that the September decree would have in retarding the development of the country, and the late Lester G. Bugbee who carefully investigated this subject in 1898 could not determine what would have been his procedure if the withdrawal of the law had been refused. Fortunately that issue did not arise. What is certain is that it was due to Austin alone that the incident closed without a greater mutual loss of confidence between the colonists and the government.²

On April 6, 1830, the Mexican Congress passed at the instigation of Lucas Alamán, the Secretary of Foreign Relations, a law regulating colonization. Though in form a general law, it was in fact directed especially at Texas and the United States. The famous eleventh article prevented the settlement of immigrants in any province of the Mexican Republic contiguous to their native land. The efforts that the United States had been making since

¹This affair can best be studied from the documents in *A Comprehensive History of Texas*, I, 518-532; and Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, I, 260-268.

²See Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," in *Political Science Quarterly*, XIII, particularly pp. 649-655.

1825 to purchase Texas caused Mexico to fear its forcible seizure as soon as there were enough Americans in the country to make the venture a success, and it was against this contingency that Alamán was seeking to guard. Its effect on the Texans who saw themselves cut off from their friends and families in the United States may well be imagined. They appealed to Austin to protect them from the "violent and fatal measures" of the government,¹ and he forthwith applied himself to this task. The law was not repealed until 1834, but the excitement gradually subsided—partly no doubt because the government could never enforce the law.

The government did, however, attempt to enforce the decree, and for that purpose ordered General Terán to establish garrisons in Texas. At the same time the seven years expired for which, according to the colonization laws, the settlers were exempt from the payment of custom duties, and the custom houses were put in operation. George Fisher, the collector at Galveston, or rather Anahuac, and Colonel John Davis Bradburn, the commander of the garrison there, soon had the colonists greatly irritated by their arbitrary proceedings. In the spring of 1832 the colonists were driven to an insurrection which ended in the expulsion of both soldiers and collectors from the country. Austin had all along held a firm tone against the methods of Fisher and Bradburn, and was accused by Terán therefor of being responsible for the opposition to those officials.² He was at Saltillo, attending the legislature, when the conflict occurred. Whether he could have prevented it is uncertain, but certainly it was largely through his influence that Colonel Mexía, whom Santa Anna sent to investigate the trouble, was convinced that the Texans were not to blame.³

This ends the review of the first period. While never deviating from his declared motto of "fidelity and gratitude to Mexico,"⁴ Austin stood always ready to guard the interests of the colonists. Thus we find him at the same time boldly writing to one Mexican official that the only way to remedy the affairs of Texas was to re-

¹Chambers to Austin, May 12, 1830. Austin Papers.

²Terán to Austin, January 27, 1832. Austin Papers.

³See Rowe, "The Disturbances at Anahuac in 1832, in *THE QUARTERLY*, VI, 265-299; Turner, "The Mejía Expedition," in *ibid.*, VII, 1-28.

⁴Austin to Muldoon, November 15, 1831. Austin Papers.

store the constitution and authority of the state, assuring another that the colonists had no desire for independence or union with the United States, and complaining to Santa Anna himself of the injustice of the law of April 6, 1830, and of the military tyranny to which the people had been subjected.¹

Since 1824 Texas had been united with Coahuila, and the movement to secure a separate state organization began in August, 1832, when the *alcalde* of San Felipe issued a call for a convention to meet October 1. One reason that he gave for the convention was the necessity of explaining officially that the recent rising against the troops did not have for its object the separation of Texas from Mexico. The meeting was in session six days (October 1-6), and passed, among other things, a resolution for the administration of the custom houses until the government could send new collectors, and adopted reports praying for the reform of the tariff, the appointment of land commissioners, a grant of land for the support of primary education, and for permission to organize the local government. Some of the delegates were in favor of drafting a provisional constitution at once and asking the general government to approve it, but Austin, who was president of the convention, thought it more prudent to petition first for the privilege of doing so, and his opinion prevailed. William H. Wharton was elected to carry the various memorials to Mexico, but for reasons unknown he did not go.²

The Mexican authorities undoubtedly believed that the colonists were planning separation not only from Coahuila, but also from the Republic;³ and it is true that the subject of independence had been discussed among them, but the evidence seems to show a decided sentiment against it. This evidence is as follows: (1) previous to the convention Austin had, in the letter mentioned above, disclaimed for the colonists any idea of secession; (2) the

¹Austin to Músquiz, June 29, 1832; to Ugartechea, June 29; to Santa Anna, July 6. Austin Papers.

²See in general the Proceedings of the Convention in Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, I, 475-503; and *A Comprehensive History of Texas*, I, 499.

³See extracts from letters of Garza, Ramón Músquiz, Angel Navarro, Eca y Musquiz, Santa Anna, and others in Brown, *History of Texas*, I, 215-221.

ayuntamiento of Gonzales had refused to participate in the convention for fear that this very motive would be attributed to it;¹ (3) letters to Austin from a correspondent in the district of Teneha declared that everybody in that neighborhood was opposed to independence, while not one in ten favored union with the United States;² and finally (4) the tone of the convention itself, so far as one can judge from its journal, was very respectful.

The disorders in Mexico were causing Austin, however, to think of the future. To a friend in the United States he wrote that the Mexican confederation might break up and leave Texas to itself; but it would be better for Texas to remain a Mexican state, "unless we could float into the Northern Republic with the consent of all parties."³ And an outspoken letter to the political chief reveals his firm conviction of the necessity of separating from Coahuila: "There is little probability," it declares,

that we shall soon have a stable and peaceable order of public affairs; and I give it as my deliberate judgement that Texas is lost if she take no measure of her own for her welfare. I incline to the opinion that it is your duty as Chief Magistrate, to call a general convention to take into consideration the condition of the country. I do not know how the State or General Government can presume to say that the people of Texas have violated the constitution, when the acts of both governments have long since killed the constitution, and when the confederation itself has hardly any life left. I cannot approve the assertion that the people have not the right to assemble peaceably, and calmly and respectfully represent their wants. In short, the condition of Texas is bad, but we may fear to see it still worse.⁴

Conditions did not improve during the winter of 1832-3, and in the spring another convention met at San Felipe. The journal of this meeting, if any was kept, has disappeared, but we know that it adopted resolutions condemning the African slave trade, petitioned for the establishment of regular mail service, modifica-

¹Brown, *History of Texas*, I, 216; Rather, "DeWitt's Colony," in *THE QUARTERLY*, VIII, 146-147.

²Harrison to Austin, November 30, December 8, 1832. Austin Papers.

³Austin to Ashby, October 10, 1832. Austin Papers.

⁴Austin to Ramón Músquiz, November 15, 1832, in Brown, *History of Texas*, I, 219.

tion of the tariff, and repeal of the law of April 6, 1830, and that it went beyond the action of the previous convention and drew up a provisional state constitution with a long memorial to the government praying for its approval.¹ Austin and two other commissioners² were elected to lay these documents before the government, but Austin alone served. He reached the capital July 18. Generals Arista and Durán had just begun an insurrection, and Santa Anna was leading a campaign against them, while Vice-President Farías was carrying on the government. Farías received him courteously and referred his petition to a committee of Congress, but gave him little enough real encouragement. Austin, when he left home, claimed to be sanguine of obtaining the repeal of the law of April 6, 1830, and permission for the Texans to hold a convention and adopt a constitution.³ Conditions in Mexico disappointed him, and for the first time he seemed clearly to recognize the possibility of Mexico's being unwilling or unable to administer Texas in a manner consistent with its highest development. While still declaring himself hopeful of success, he wrote: "But if our application is refused, I shall be in favor of organizing *without it*—I see no other way of saving the country from total anarchy and ruin—I am totally done with conciliatory measures, and for the future shall be uncompromising as [to] Texas matters."⁴

As August and September wore along the issue of the civil war in Mexico appeared doubtful, and Austin became more and more impatient. If a change of administration occurred, his object might be indefinitely delayed. On the first of October therefore he called on Farías and told him plainly that if some attention were not paid to the wishes of the Texans he feared that they

¹Edward, *History of Texas*, 196-205; Yoakum, *History of Texas*, I, 467-482; THE QUARTERLY, VI, 151, VIII, 240-246.

²There is some difference of opinion as to who the others were. Yoakum (I, 312), Bancroft (*North Mexican States and Texas*, II, 134), and Bryan (*A Comprehensive History of Texas*, I, 499) say W. H. Wharton and J. B. Miller; Kennedy (*Texas*, II, 23) and Garrison (*Texas*, 185) say J. B. Miller and Erasmo Seguin. Thrall (*History of Texas*, 189, note) calls attention to the difference between Yoakum and Kennedy, but follows Yoakum.

³Austin to Perry, April 22, 1833. Austin Papers.

⁴Austin to Perry, July 30, 1833. Austin Papers.

would take the remedy into their own hands. The vice-president interpreted this as a threat and was greatly offended, and Austin left the conference with the conviction that nothing was to be expected from the government. The next day he wrote: "I am tired of the govt. Texas must take care of herself without paying any attention to these people or to this govt.—They a[lways have been in?] revolution and I believe always will be. I have had much more respect for them than they deserve—but I am [done with?] all that."¹ The same day he wrote to the *ayuntamiento* of Bexar stating his belief that no reforms were to be gained from the government, and urging it to take the lead in declaring Texas a separate state. He appears to have thought on the one hand that the Texans, if left to themselves, might go even further than that, and on the other that a movement begun by the Mexican population of Bexar would encounter less resistance from the government.² The *ayuntamiento* had adopted a vigorous protest in December, 1832, against the same evils of which the convention complained,³ and it was not unreasonable to hope that it might now inaugurate the local organization. Later Austin made his peace with Fariás and became slightly more hopeful, though on the 23d he wrote his brother-in-law, "the fact is this govt. ought to make a state of Texas, or transfer her to the U. S.—without delay, and there is some probability at this time that one or the other will be done. A short time will now determine this matter in some way."⁴

Early in November Santa Anna returned to the capital, after winning a decisive victory over the insurgents at Guanajuato, and promised favorable action on all of the petitions presented by Austin except that for separate statehood; and even that should be granted, he said, as soon as the country was prepared for it. Austin remained in the city until December 10 and then started home very well satisfied. At Saltillo on January 3, 1834, he was arrested by order of the vice-president, on account of the letter

¹Austin to Perry, October 2, 1833. Austin Papers.

²Austin's "Explanation to the Public," etc., translation by Ethel Zivley. Rather in *THE QUARTERLY*, VIII, 247, 248, 249.

³The document is printed in Filisola, *Memorias para la historia de la guerra de Tejas*, I, 272-293.

⁴Austin to Perry, October 23, 1833. Austin Papers.

that he had written to the *ayuntamiento* of Bexar, and taken back to the City of Mexico. The next eleven months, from February to December, he spent in various prisons of the capital, while court after court disclaimed jurisdiction over his case. Christmas day he was liberated on bail, but was not allowed to leave the city. Finally, under the operation of a general amnesty law, he started again for Texas in July, 1835.

Austin's letters from prison are not always ingenuous. His first aim was to obtain his release, and to do this it was necessary to keep the colonists from making any hasty demonstrations and to convince the government of his loyalty. He wrote, therefore, for two sets of readers—for he doubtless expected his letters to be intercepted and read by the government before they reached Texas. He tried to soothe the colonists by reminding them that their most serious grievances had been removed by the state legislation of 1834—and this was literally true,¹ though perhaps neither he nor they believed the prospect to be as fair as he represented it;—while upon the government he sought to create a double impression of his satisfaction with the reforms and of his pacific influence over the colonists. At the same time it is not necessary to believe that as yet Austin's words did real violence to his convictions. Though beginning to doubt, he was still loyal to Mexico, and he did believe it to the best interest of the colonists to remain tranquil. Such deception as he may have practiced may certainly be forgiven to a man in his position, for in his own mind he had committed no wrong.

Some extracts from Austin's letters will illustrate his double motive. Announcing his arrest to his brother-in-law, James F. Perry, he wrote:

All I can be accused of is that I have labored most diligently and indefatigably to get Texas made a state separate from Coahuila, and that is no crime, nor no dishonor—it is quite the reverse. . . . I hope there will be no excitement about my arrest—it

¹Several new municipalities were created; the province was divided for administrative purposes into three departments, two of the three being Anglo-American in population; the use of both English and Spanish in public documents was permitted; and a judicial system was organized, granting trial by jury. See Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, I, 352, 355-356, 364-380, 384.

will do me harm and no good to Texas, that is, unless I should be unjustly dealt by, in that case there will be cause for excitement. . . . A little time will put all right—there will be toleration of religion—Texas will be a state, and all will go right. . . . There is no sort of doubt of the *right* of the people of Texas to take care of themselves, if there be no other remedy—this is more than a right—it is a duty—but evil may be done by precipitation.¹

Two days later he wrote again to Perry: "My advice to Texas is what it has always been—remain quiet—populate the country—improve your farms—and discountenance all revolutionary men or principles." To S. M. Williams he wrote May 3, 1834,² suggesting that the people publish an address of thanks to the state government for the recent laws in favor of Texas; the evils were now removed and a public acknowledgment should be made to place Texas in a true light both in Mexico and in the United States, where the object of the Texans was misunderstood. On May 10 he wrote Perry that his own principles had always been "peace, quietness, patience, and submission to the laws, no revolutions"; if he had ever wandered from those principles it had been to prevent the increase of the evils by party divisions; it was "very certain that Texas must become a state at some future and not very distant day," but he had made a mistake in agreeing to the convention of 1833 which was called during his absence; however, he concluded, "the only substantial matter in this business that is worthy of consideration is that *much substantial good will result to Texas from my sufferings, and I am content.*" Again, August 25, "S. F. Austin's motto always has been Fidelity to Mexico, opposition to violent men or measures"; and finally, November 10, "I have done my duty to the people of Texas so far as it was in my power to do it, and I have not in anything departed from my duty as a good and faithful Mexican citizen."³ One thing at least these quotations show, and that is an unvarying regard for the welfare of Texas.

Austin believed that his imprisonment was prolonged by the

¹Austin to Perry, January 14, 1834. Austin Papers. Of the same tenor is his letter to George Fisher, January 15.

²Austin Papers.

³All these letters are from Austin to Perry. Austin Papers.

machinations of his personal enemies in Texas and Mexico,¹ and there are some indications that he was right. A man whose name a Mexican copyist makes out to be Alexandro Calecik wrote from Texas to J. A. Mexía, August 29, 1833, that Austin had acquired land and property to the value of a million and a half *pesos* and asked the unsuccessful native's universal question concerning the enterprising foreigner, "why should the government allow such a person so much money that ought to go to its own support." Austin was obnoxious (*nocino*) to Texas as well as to the general government, he said, and he expressed the hope that Mexía would detain him in Mexico five years. The personal motive is disclosed by the intimation that Austin's presence in Texas might interfere with the writer's plan to obtain a grant of land in the profits of which Mexía was to share.² Pointing in the same direction is a strange letter written from New York by J. Gutierrez, of whom I know nothing, to President Van Buren, May 29, 1834. He declared that he had it on the best authority that a number of Mexican officials, particularly Mexía and Zavala, wanted to make Texas independent of Mexico, and

to secure there a safe retreat or property, should there be a fresh revolution in Mexico. There was but one man in the whole Colony Who *leur portait ombrage* and migh[t] have opposed their schem[e], or neutralized their views to sway the projected state, and this was the enterprising Colonel Austin, of whom they were on the point of getting rid when on the 24th of April Santa Anna the President informed of this mismanagement of affairs returned to the capital and took charge of the Government.³

Finally H. Meigs wrote Austin from New York, September 29, 1835, congratulating him on regaining his liberty and declaring

¹He wrote to Perry, March 4, 1835 (Austin Papers), that Anthony Butler, John T. Mason, and J. A. Mexía would have kept him in a dungeon for years if they could, because he had opposed the plan of organizing Texas as a territory, and so had interfered with some of their land speculation schemes.

²Fomento Sección de Archivo Colonización, Exp. Num. 5, Legajo 2.

³Van Buren MSS. in the Library of Congress. The writer goes on to say that Santa Anna instituted an impartial inquiry into the proceedings against Austin and that it was expected that he would soon be at liberty. It was in fact about this time that Santa Anna revoked the order that had kept Austin *incommunicado* since his imprisonment.

that a great interest had been exerted to destroy him and his property. "Truly your escape is most fortunate."¹

His observation of Mexican politics at close range, and perhaps to some extent his personal experience, led Austin to his third position—the decision that the ultimate welfare of Texas demanded its separation from Mexico. And the disorganization of the national government during the past decade had been enough, in all reason, to shake the confidence of the most pronounced optimist. President Victoria's administration from 1824 to 1828 had been filled with plots and counter-plots of rival factions; Pedraza had won the presidency in the exciting election of 1828 only to be forced after a month's tenure to resign in favor of his opponent, General Guerrero; Guerrero held the office some nine months, and was overthrown by Bustamante; in 1832 Santa Anna overthrew Bustamante, and restored Pedraza to power for a fleeting three months; and then was elected himself; the first two years of his term were filled with schemes that historians have not yet fathomed, there were some pretended rebellions and at least one real insurrection; and by the beginning of 1835 the clanking of the machinery that was to transform the government into an absolutism was plainly to be heard.

Austin probably came around to the idea of separation slowly. His letter to Ashby, referred to above,² might indicate that he was thinking of the contingency in 1832, but as late as July, 1834, he excited the contempt of Anthony Butler by refusing to further the latter's efforts to purchase Texas for the United States. Secretary of State McLane had written Butler to intercede for the amelioration of Austin's confinement, and Butler replied that he was already faring far better than his deserts; that he did not merit either the sympathy or the assistance of the United States government. "He is unquestionably one of the bitterest foes to our Government and people that is to be found in Mexico, and has done more to embarrass our Negotiations upon a certain subject than all the rest of the opposition together: and I am very sure that he was the principal cause of my being defeated

¹Austin Papers.

²See page 262.

in the last effort made to obtain a cession of Texas." . . .¹ The assumption that Butler was telling the truth is perhaps not too hazardous; though Austin gives one the impression that he incurred at least a part of Butler's enmity by opposing a territorial government for Texas.²

There are in the Austin Papers nine letters from H. Meigs to Austin which give one side of an interesting correspondence from which we can guess only too vaguely at the other, but they plainly suggest on Austin's part a reconnoissance to learn how far the United States could be depended on for help in case of a breach between Texas and Mexico. In the first one Meigs merely announces that the United States government has interceded for Austin, and remarks that he wrote to him several months ago and hopes for a favorable reply. In the second he repeats that the government is interested in Austin's case and adds the information that he himself stimulated the interest through his friend Louis McLane and his brother-in-law John Forsyth. These letters were dated May 30 and September 27, 1834. The remaining seven were written in 1835—May 2, September 1, September 29, November 15 (two letters of this date), November 22, November 27. In the earlier ones he says that he conceals what Austin writes from everybody except Forsyth, who promises to give him all proper aid; assures Austin that sympathy for himself and his colony is almost universal; and exhorts him to maintain his "accustomed prudence and fortitude." Later he refers to Austin's "philanthropic and just designs in favor of Texas." November 15, after the revolution had begun, he writes: "Public sentiment is aroused for your cause. We know that you are Bone of our Bone! and Flesh of our Flesh! That none but a Republican Government can exist over you! . . . Tens of thousands will join you, and with you, lay the firm foundations of your Republic." But as yet the law of nations and treaty with Mexico prevented the United

¹McLane to Butler, May 26, 1834, MSS. Department of State, Instructions to Agents to Mexico, 1835, p. 25; Butler to McLane, July 13, 1834, MSS. Department of State, Despatches from Agents to Mexico, Vol. 6. The attention of the government seems to have been called to Austin's plight by H. Meigs, the brother-in-law of John Forsyth (see Meigs to Austin, May 30, September 27, 1834. Austin Papers).

²Austin to Perry, March 4, 1835. Austin Papers.

States from interfering. The letter ends with a significant prayer, "May the Almighty protect you and your Republican Brethren in your progress to that glorious Independence which is in my mind's eye not only Before you but very near to you." A second letter of the same date acknowledges receipt of one from Austin dated October 6, and adds, "the package relative to the Indians I have already sent to Washington (confidentially)." Finally on November 27 he quotes from Forsyth who wrote him that the government had warned the Indians on the western frontier of the United States to remain quiet and take no part in the troubles which were involving Texas. The significance of this correspondence can be appreciated only by considering the earlier letters in connection with the later ones, and for that reason the course of events has been somewhat anticipated.

Having determined in his own mind that a breach must come, Austin believed that the essential thing was to make Texas so strong that Mexico could not resist. A letter to Perry of March 3, 1835,¹ gives one a glimpse of his mental process. After saying that a friendly feeling prevailed in Mexico toward Texas, and that Congress would do something for it, if it were not so distracted by national affairs, he continues, "However, it is really not so *very* important whether anything is done or not if a dead calm and union can be preserved in that country—emigration—good crops—no party divisions—no excitement—no personalities should be the political creed of every one in Texas." March 31 S. M. Williams wrote him² that during January and February two thousand immigrants had landed at the mouth of the Brazos alone, and from this he says that the goal was nearer than he had expected.

As has been said, Austin finally left the City of Mexico about the middle of July and reached Texas September 1, by way of Vera Cruz and New Orleans. Filisola declares³ that he went to New Orleans to buy arms and munitions of war, but it is more likely that he could not get passage directly home from Vera

¹Austin Papers.

²Austin Papers.

³*Memorias para la historia de la guerra de Tejas*, II, 141.

Cruz.¹ Whatever may have been his reason for going, while there he unbosomed himself as to his plans for Texas in a very candid letter to his cousin Mrs. Holley. Long as it is, it is worth quoting in full:²

NEW ORLEANS, August 21, 1835.

My dear Cousin,

I am, as you will see by my date, once more in the land of my birth, and of *freedom*—a word I can well appreciate. I shall leave here in a day or two for Texas. I wished to have taken a trip up the river, and thence to the North, but shall have to defer it until spring. I have been so long absent from home, that my affairs there are behind hand, and require my attention.

The situation of Texas is daily becoming more and more interesting, so much so that I doubt whether the Government of the United States or that of Mexico can much longer look on with indifference, or inaction. It is very evident that Texas should be effectually, and fully, *Americanized*,—that is—settled by a population that will harmonize with their neighbors on the *East*, in language, political principles, common origin, sympathy, and even interest. *Texas must be a slave country. It is no longer a matter of doubt.* The interest of Louisiana requires that it should be. A population of fanatical abolitionists in Texas would have a very dangerous and pernicious influence on the overgrown slave population of that state. Texas must and ought to become an outwork on the west, as Alabama and Florida are on the east, to defend the key of the western world—the mouths of the Mississippi. Being fully Americanized under the Mexican flag would be the same thing in effect and ultimate result as coming under the United States flag. A gentle breeze shakes off a ripe peach. Can it be supposed that the violent political convulsions of Mexico will not shake off Texas as soon as it is ripe enough to fall? All that is now wanting is a great immigration of good and efficient families this fall and winter. Should we get such an immigration, especially from the Western States—all is done; the peach will be ripe. Under this view, and it is the correct one, every man of influence in the Western States, who has the true interests of his country at heart ought to use every possible exertion to induce such an immigration. They can get lands; *now is the accepted time*, and none too soon. The door is still open for them to come in legally. The

¹I have the greater confidence in this hypothesis because in one of his letters to Perry (January 14, 1834—Austin Papers) Austin gives instructions for forwarding his mail by Tampico or Vera Cruz, and tells Perry if no other opportunity offers to send it by New Orleans.

²From a copy by Mrs. M. A. Holley in the Austin Papers.

government of Mexico cannot complain—it has invited immigration.

General Santa Anna told me he should visit Texas next March—as a friend. His visit is uncertain—his friendship more so. We must rely on ourselves, and prepare for the worst. A large immigration will prepare us, give us strength, resources, everything. I do not know the state of public feeling in Texas, but presume they mean to avoid all collision with Mexico if possible to do so, and be also ready to repel attacks should they come. This is my opinion. A great emigration from Kentucky, Tennessee, etc, each man with his rifle or musket, would be of great use to us—very great indeed. If they go by sea, they must take passports from the Mexican consul, comply with all the requirements of the law, and get *legally* into the country, so long as the door is legally open. Should it be closed it will then be time enough to force it open—if necessary. *Prudence and an observance of appearances* must therefore be strictly attended to for the present. Here, I figure to my self, you start and exclaim “Dios mio,” my cousin Stephen has become a very Mexican politician in hypocrisy. Not so; there is no hypocrisy about it. It is well known that my object has always been to fill up Texas with a North American population; and, besides, it may become a question of *to be, or not to be*. And in that event, the great law of nature—self preservation—operates and supersedes all other laws. The cause of philanthropy and liberty, also, will be promoted by Americanizing Texas. I am morally right, therefore, to do so by all possible, honorable, means.

In all countries, one way or another, a few men rule society. If those few were convinced of the great benefits that would result to the Western world by *Americanizing* Texas, they would exert their influence to promote that object, and in so doing use such arguments as would best effect it, without letting anything transpire in the public prints to alarm the Mexican government, or place that of the United States in the awkward necessity of taking any steps, as a friend of Mexico under the treaty etc.

If there were any way of getting at it, I should like to know what the *wise* men of the United States think the people of Texas ought to do. The fact, is, we must and ought to become a part of the United States. Money should be no consideration. The political importance of Texas to the great western world, from the influence it may one day have on Louisiana, is so great that it cannot fail to have due weight on all reflecting men, and on Gen. Jackson and the Senate in particular. The more the American population of Texas is increased the more readily will the Mexican Government give it up. Also, the more the people of Texas seem

to oppose a separation from Mexico, the less tenacious will they be to hold it. This seems paradoxical, but it will cease to appear so when you consider that strange compound the Mexican character. If Texas insisted on separating, and it should be given up in consequence, it would appear as if they had yielded to force, or fear, and their national pride would be roused. They are a strange people, and must be studied to be managed. They have high ideas of National dignity should it be openly attacked, but will sacrifice national dignity, and national interest too, if it can be done in a *still* way, or so as not to arrest public attention. "Dios castiga el ascandolo mas que el crimen" (God punishes the exposure more than the crime) is their motto. The maxim influences their morals and their politics. I learned it when I was there in 1822, and I now believe that if I had not always kept it in view, and known the power which *appearances* have on them, even when they know they are deceived, I should never have succeeded to the extent I have done, in Americanizing Texas.

To conclude, I wish a great immigration this fall and winter from Kentucky, Tennessee, *every where*; passports or no passports, *anyhow*. For fourteen years I have had a hard time of it, but nothing shall daunt my courage or abate my exertions to complete the main object of my labors—to *Americanize Texas*. This fall and winter will fix our fate—a great immigration will settle the question.

Truly yours,

S. F. Austin.

Arrived in Texas, Austin found conditions more critical than he expected. The country was divided between those who believed that resistance to Santa Anna's measures was the only course left and the moderates who favored submission, or at least continued patience. A consultation had been called to meet on October 15 to settle upon a definite policy, and Austin from the beginning devoted himself to making this a completely representative body. He feared that Texas was not yet strong enough to cope with Mexico, but could not give the peace-party any encouragement. On September 8 he spoke at a public dinner at Brazoria. He deplored the existing confusion, which he attributed to the "total want of a local government in Texas"; he declared that the revolution in Mexico was for the purpose of destroying the federal constitution of 1824 and setting up a centralized government; that the people had a right to say whether they were willing to surrender their

vested constitutional rights, which such a change involved; and that a consultation would enable them to answer the question with calmness and deliberation. While Santa Anna had repeatedly called himself the friend of the Texans and promised to use his influence to secure for them in the new constitution "a special organization suited to their education, habits, and situation," Austin plainly put little faith in his promise. He closed his speech with these words:

My friends, I can truly say that no one has been, or now is more anxious than myself to keep trouble away from this country, no one has been or now is more faithful to his duty as a Mexican citizen, and no one has personally sacrificed or suffered more to discharge this duty. I have uniformly opposed having anything to do with the family political quarrels of the Mexicans. Texas needs peace and a local Government; its inhabitants are farmers, they need a calm and quiet life. But . . . the crisis is certainly such as to bring it home to the judgement of every man that something must be done and that without delay. . . . Let all personalities, or divisions, or excitements, or passions, or violence be banished from among us. Let a general Consultation of the people of Texas be convened as speedily as possible, to be composed of the best, the most calm, and intelligent, and firm men in the country, and let them decide what representations ought to be made to the general government, and what ought to be done in the future.¹

Four days later (September 12) Austin presided over a meeting at San Felipe which endorsed the consultation and elected him a member of the local committee of vigilance and correspondence.² Thereafter he was the recognized head of Texas, hearing reports, answering questions, offering suggestions, and even issuing orders that were obeyed. He turned first to the task of ensuring the consultation, and a circular letter of September 13 shows that he interpreted the meaning of the word literally—the delegates were to *consult* and recommend measures for the definitive action of a subsequent convention. Measures advised by such a meeting would "carry with them the weight of being the *voice* of all Texas instead of the *opinion* of a few," and could not fail "to produce unanimity

¹*The Texas Republican*, September 19, 1835. The speech may also be read in Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 60-65.

²*The Texas Republican*, September 19, 1835.

at home, respect and confidence abroad.”¹ Less than a week later, however, he had received information which caused him to advise that delegates be given plenary powers “to do whatever may be necessary for the good of the country.”²

Soon the march of events forced a war note into the correspondence which was not long in excluding everything else. Edward Gritten wrote from Bexar that troops would march into the colonies and put things to rights whether the Texans submitted or not,³ and Austin made this letter the basis of a broadside of September 19,⁴ in which he said that nothing was to be gained by further conciliatory measures; that every district ought to organize its militia and report its strength in arms and ammunition to the political chief of the department, so that he could lay it before the consultation; and concluded “War is our only resource.” The next day he wrote W. D. C. Hall that Cos “lays down the principle that the General Government have the right to force us to submit to any reform or amendment or alterations that Congress may make in the Constitution etc. This is impossible; we had better leave the country at once, for we should be, under Cos’ doctrine, without any rights or guaranties of any kind. I therefore think that war is inevitable; we must prepare.”⁵ In similar vein on the same day he wrote to P. W. Grayson, and this letter shows that the responsibility of his position was beginning to tell upon him. He seemed uncertain whether the people would agree with him. “Tell me,” he begged, “what we can do except to fight . . . Give me your opinion and that of the people of that quarter. These things have come on us much sooner than I expected, . . . but there is no remedy that I can see. Cos has precipitated them.”⁶ But if he hesitated, it was not for long; on the 21st he wrote the committee of Columbia, “There must now be no half way measures—War in full. The sword is drawn and

¹*The Texas Republican*, September 19, 1835.

²*The Texas Republican*, September 26, 1835.

³Gritten to Barrett, September 8, 1835. Austin Papers.

⁴Archives of Texas, D 267; *The Texas Republican*, September 26, 1835. The circular is printed in full in Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 67-68, and in Brown, *History of Texas*, I, 355-356.

⁵*The Texas Republican*, September 26, 1835.

⁶Austin to Grayson, September 19, 1835. Austin Papers.

the scabbard must be put on one side until the military are all driven out of Texas."¹ And on the 22d a ringing call urged every man in Texas to seize his weapons and defend his country and his rights.² A busy correspondence of this type was kept up³ until the first blow had been struck and it was no longer a question of whether there should be war, but of how the war should be carried on.

A contemporary appreciation of Austin's influence by one who did not always agree with him is afforded by a letter to him from W. B. Travis. The latter said:

War in defence of Texas and our dearest rights has infused itself into the minds of the people, and I think it will require but little exertion to get troops together for the promotion of any project which you recommend. All eyes are turned toward you; and the . . . stand you have taken has given the *sovereigns* confidence in themselves. Texas can be wielded by you and *you alone*; and her destiny is now completely in your hands. I have every confidence that you will guide us safely through all our perils.⁴

Austin himself explained his position to his friend Thomas F. McKinney thus:

I believe you know and understand the principles that have always influenced me. I was in times past opposed to mixing *war* measures with our affairs—we were then at peace and a calm was all important to draw immigration to the country. At that time no important fundamental or permanent right or principle was attacked. I was therefore for *peace in full*, no half way measures. I acquiesced in some, but reluctantly as is well known . . . Now our position is quite different—our *all* is at stake, it is even a question of life or death . . . I now believe that our

¹*The Texas Republican*, September 26, 1835.

²*Ibid.*

³To the committee of Matagorda, October 2, 1835, archives of Texas, D 28; Circular, October 3, 1835, in *The Texas Republican*, October 10, 1835. Brown, *History of Texas*, I, 358-363, Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 85-90; to Kerr and Alley, October 3, 1835. Archives of Texas, D 27; to the committee of Harrisburg, October 4, 1835, archives of Texas, D 25; to the committee of Nacogdoches, October 4, 1835, in the *Telegraph and Texas Register*, April 4, 1837, Brown, I, 353-354, and Foote, II, 84-85.

⁴Travis to Austin, September 22, 1835, Austin Papers; *Publications of So. His. Assn.*, VI, 420-421.

rights are attacked and that war is our only remedy. I am therefore for *war in full, and no half way measures*.¹

A letter of September 30 to Perry² shows that Austin realized that the present trouble might lead to independence: "The foundation of a govt. (perhaps of a nation) is to be sketched out—the dayly progress of events is to [be] watched over, and public sentiment kept from going too fast or too slow." But he did not yet believe that Texas was strong enough to stand alone. At the outbreak of hostilities (October 2) he was called to command the army, and from his camp at Salado, October 25, he wrote a memorandum to guide the action of the consultation which had been postponed to November 1. In his opinion it ought to issue a statement confirming the declaration of the recent municipal meetings in favor of the constitution of 1824; to declare Texas a state of the Mexican confederation, and organize a government with a provisional governor and lieutenant-governor; to retain provisionally the existing laws and constitution of Coahuila and Texas; to pledge the resources of the state for funds to maintain the war in defence of the federal system; to raise a small regular army and organize the militia; to make peace with the Indians, annul fraudulent land grants, and establish a messenger service. "Anything beyond this, like forming a new constitution &c would do harm, and possibly produce great confusion." He thought that if there had been "too much precipitation heretofore, it ought to be a lesson to avoid that error in future."³ The substance of this was embodied by the consultation in the declaration of November 7.⁴

But Austin had no intention of sacrificing principle to expediency, and after seeing a copy of the decree of the Mexican Congress which on October 3 abolished the federal system he wrote a very strong letter to the provisional government. The volunteers at Bexar were fighting, he said, to sustain the constitution of 1824, but if the decree of October 3 were carried into effect "and a central and despotic government established where all authority is to

¹Austin to McKinney, September 27, 1835. Austin Papers.

²Austin Papers.

³Archives of Texas, Records in Department of State, Vol. 3, pp. 24-25.

⁴For this declaration see *Journals* of the Consultation, 21-22; THE QUARTERLY, VI, 280-281.

be concentrated in one person or in a few persons in the City of Mexico, sustained by military and ecclesiastical power, the volunteer army will also in that event do their duty to their country—to the cause of Liberty and themselves, as honor, patriotism, and the first law of nature may require.” Certainly a people have the right to change their government, but it must be done legally and constitutionally, otherwise they cannot force a portion of the people who oppose it to accept the change.

However necessary then the basis established by the decree of 3d of October may be to prevent civil wars and anarchy in other parts of Mexico, it is attempted to be effected by force and unconstitutional means. However beneficial it may be to some parts of Mexico, it would be ruinous to Texas. . . . if carried into effect, [it] evidently leaves no remedy for Texas but resistance, secession from Mexico and a direct resort to natural right.

Concerning his own position he said :

I have labored for years to unite Texas permanently to the Mexican confederation by separating its local government and internal administration so far as practicable from every other part of Mexico, and placing it in the hands of the people of Texas, who are certainly best acquainted with their own local wants and could best harmonize in legislating for them. . . . This country must either be a state of the Mexican confederation or must separate in toto as an independent community or seek protection from some power that recognizes the principles of self government. I can see no remedy between one of these three positions and total ruin.¹

On December 3 at the request of D. C. Barrett, a member of the provisional government, Austin prepared a lengthy opinion on the subject of a new and more completely representative convention. He thought that one should meet as soon as possible to adopt a more definite position than that defined by the declaration of November 7;² the Texans should declare unequivocally either for the constitution of 1824 or for absolute independence, so that

¹Archives of Texas, Records Department of State, Vol. 3, pp. 159-164, *passim*.

²In a letter of December 22 he explained that his chief objection to the declaration of November 7 was that it did not in plain terms declare Texas a Mexican state.

no doubt could remain of their real intentions. He still favored the former of these positions in the hope of drawing the Mexican Liberals to their assistance;¹ and his opinion was strengthened and given great weight by the fact that Captain Julian Miracle was then at San Felipe asking the intentions of the Texans and promising cooperation by the Liberals of Tamaulipas and Nuevo León if their object was to uphold the constitution of 1824.² Austin helped to draft a statement giving the proper assurances to Miracle, and on the 11th wrote to the president of the general council urging the adoption of a constitution and the organization of a permanent government "in conformity with the Declaration of 7 November last, especially with the 5th article,³ and without making any change in the principles of that declaration." This, he thought, could be done only by a new convention elected on the basis of equal representation.⁴

Immediately after writing this letter Austin left San Felipe for Velasco whence he was to embark as one of three commissioners to enlist sympathy and raise funds for Texas in the United States. On his way he met Colonel Mexía who was returning from his disastrous expedition to Tampico and who still had great plans for the overthrow of Santa Anna and the restoration of republicanism. He showed Austin a number of letters from important persons in Mexico who promised aid, and Austin became more confident that the November declaration outlined the proper policy for Texas. From Columbia he wrote to the provisional government on December 14,⁵

I am more and more convinced every day, and especially, on calm

¹Archives of Texas, Records Department of State, Vol. 3, pp. 157-159. This copy is dated December 2, but Barrett's letter and the rough draft of Austin's reply, which are in Austin Papers, are dated the 3d.

²See report of information given by Miracle, December 5, 1835, Archives of Texas, State Library; *THE QUARTERLY*, V, 299-300.

³This article reads, "Fifth, That they hold it to be their right, during the disorganization of the federal system and reign of despotism, to withdraw from the Union, to establish an independent government, or to adopt such measures as they may deem best calculated to protect their rights and liberties; but that they will continue faithful to the Mexican government so long as that nation is governed by the constitution and laws that were formed for the government of the political association."

⁴Austin to General Council, December 11, 1835. MS., Texas State Library.

⁵MS., Texas State Library.

reflection during a solitary ride down here, that the political position of Texas should continue as established by the declaration of 7th Novr. last. This declaration secures to Texas *everything*, and without any hazard, for it satisfies the federal party, and is sufficient to secure their support and co-operation. Should the federal system fall, the 5th article is a declaration of independence as a matter of course.

A change to the basis of independence now might create an impression of indecision and unstableness abroad and would certainly forfeit the support of the Federalists. "Texas ought therefore to adhere rigidly and firmly to the declaration of 7 Novr. and the public acts should correspond with it, in *words* and in object." From Velasco, a week later, he wrote another extremely interesting letter which deserves quotation in full.

Velasco Decr. 22. 1835.

The best interest of Texas I think requires that the war should be kept out of this country and beyond the Rio Grande. On this principle I was in favor of fitting out Col Gonzales and did every thing I could to do so. I was, and am in favor of giving to Genl. Mexia and his men what aid we could, and generally of affording assistance to the federal party in the interior by such *auxiliary* forces as we could spare. I have been and am opposed to any measures that will give the general govt. in Mexico any foundation to say that the Texas war, is purely a national war against foreigners and foreign invaders—In short I have thought, and still think that Texas should rigidly adhere to the leading principles of the declaration of 7 Novr. last. By so doing we preserve our character for consistency and good faith.

I will here observe, that in my communication to the provisional govt. of 2d. instant recommending the convocation of a convention on the basis of equal representation, I objected to the declaration of 7 Novr. as being liable to [mis]construction. Perhaps I ought to state the extent and nature of my objection—it is this—The declaration does not declare Texas to be a state of the Mexican confederation, which I think it ought to have done, subject however to all the other provisions and principles established in it—This would have given a fixed and definite character to the political position of Texas and concentrated public opinion, and at the same time left her the option of reuniting with Mexico or not hereafter, according as the federal constitution when reestablished conformed or not to the republican principles of the federal system, for it is to be remembered that the declaration of 7 Novr. does not adhere to all the anti-republican features and defects of the con-

stitution of 1824, it only adheres to its *republican principles* and to the federal system.

It is well known that the object of the federal party of Mexico at this time is to reform the constitution of 1824 so as to expunge all its anti-republican principles. Our declaration of 7 Novr. in this respect is therefore in strict conformity with the basis on which the federal party are acting.

But it is objected that Texas cannot declare herself a "state of the Mexican confederation, unless she does so under the constitution of 1824 with all its defects &c. To this I answer, that, the disposition of the social compact and the present political situation of all Mexico, gives to Texas the right of declaring herself an independent community—This being the case she certainly has the right to do much less, that is, to say she will continue united with the Mexican confederation, provided the federal party succeed in reestablishing the federal system on truly republican principles, free from the defects of the constitution of 1824, at the same time offering her aid to that party to effect this object.

As to independence—I think it will strengthen the cause of Texas to show that we have *legal* and *equitable* and just grounds to declare independence, and under this view I touched upon this subject in my communication to the provisional Govt. of the 30th ultimo. But I also think that it will weaken Texas, and expose the old settlers and men of property in this country to much risk, to make such a declaration at this time, and under the present circumstances, for the reason that it will turn all parties in Mexico against us—bring back the war to our own doors, which is now removed from Texas by the fall of Bexar, and compel the people to seek aid at any sacrifice—I do not think it necessary to run any such risk, for the natural current of events will soon regulate everything. A large portion of the Mexicans are determined to be free, if they succeed, Texas will participate as a state in conformity with the declaration of 7 Novr.—if they fail, Texas can at any time resort to her natural rights.

[A paragraph here omitted speaks of the arrival of volunteers from the United States, and advises the formation of "a federal auxiliary army."]

I write this letter as a citizen of Texas, and not as a Commissioner—I give my opinions frankly and refer you to Col. Fannin for a farther explanation of them. . . .

Respectfully

Your Obt. Servt.

S. F. Austin.

To the Provisional Government
of Texas.¹

¹MS., Texas State Library.

This is Austin's final word before leaving Texas. It is certainly distinctly pronounced in favor of the November declaration; but notice carefully that adherence to Mexico is based on a very definite condition—namely, the maintenance of democratic government with considerable local power in the states, of which Texas must be one in its own right. The Mexican Liberals were, in fact, a broken reed, and when Austin wrote this letter most members of the provisional government were beginning to realize it. By the middle of January the hope of assistance from them had been abandoned.¹

The first expression that I have found from Austin after his arrival in New Orleans is a letter of January 7, 1836, to General Sam Houston.² In this he said that he was now in favor of an immediate declaration of independence; he had felt when he left Texas that it was premature to stir that question because it would at once give the war a national, racial character, and he was not sure that the Texans would be sustained (presumably by the people of the United States). He now knew that they could get all the aid that was needed; moreover, he had not only not heard of any movement on the part of the Federalists to assist them, but rather that all parties were united against them. The provisional government might have some cause for encouragement of which he did not know, but in the face of such information as he had before him he was for a declaration of independence. If his position had hitherto been disingenuous the first two paragraphs of this letter afford an ample justification:

In all our Texas affairs, as you are well apprised, I have felt it to be my duty to be very cautious in involving the pioneers and actual settlers of that country, by any act of mine, until I was fully and clearly convinced of its necessity, and of the capabilities of our resources to sustain it. Hence it is that I have been censured by some for being over cautious. Where the fate of a whole people is in question, it is difficult to be over cautious, or to be too prudent.

Besides these general considerations, there are others which ought to have weight with me individually. I have been, either directly or indirectly, the cause of drawing many families to Texas, also

¹See THE QUARTERLY, IX, 246-247.

²Foote, *Texas and the Texans*, II, 194-196.

the situation and circumstances in which I have been placed have given considerable weight to my opinions. This has thrown a heavy responsibility upon me—so much so, that I have considered it to be my *duty* to be prudent, and even to control my own impulses and feelings: these have long been impatient under the state of things which has existed in Texas, and in favour of a speedy and *radical change*. But I have never approved of the course of forestalling public opinion, by party or partial meetings or by management of any kind. The true course is to lay *facts* before the people and let them judge for themselves. I have endeavoured to pursue this course. . . .

Henceforth, having finally laid his course, Austin looked not backward.¹ He did not escape contemporary criticism and charges of vacillation, for R. R. Royall wrote: "I must acknowledge he changes with great rapidity. If he could send us the men, money, and provisions with half as much rapidity we could Declare for any policy we pleased and maintain it."² While his old friend Thomas F. McKinney wrote him that they must at last part company in politics; "I am now fully convinced that you cannot be anything else but an injury to your country when you have influence."³ But with the mass of the people his opinion carried weight, and did much to unite them in favor of that declaration of independence which the convention adopted on March 2, 1836.

Local students of Texas history have usually resented any imputation that Austin was disloyal to Mexico, but from the foregoing study it appears that his guiding motive was fidelity to Texas rather than to Mexico. For a long time he perceived in loyalty to Mexico the true interest of Texas—and it is pleasant to believe that he would have been glad to have it always so,⁴—but when few intelligent observers thought this longer possible, and Austin himself became convinced of it, he turned the whole weight

¹See among others his letters of January 10, 14, 16, 18, 21, February 18, March 3, April 4, etc., etc., in Austin Papers and Texas State Library.

²Royall to President of General Council, January 27, 1836. MS., Texas State Library.

³McKinney to Austin, February 22, 1836. Austin Papers.

⁴Study his letter of December 22, 1835, to the provisional government: "A large portion of the Mexicans are determined to be free, if they succeed, Texas will participate as a state in conformity with the declaration of 7 Novr.—if they fail, Texas can at any time resort to her natural rights." See page 281 above.

of his influence to uniting the people in opposition to the government. He could not have prevented the Texas revolution if he had tried, because Santa Anna in 1835 was determined upon measures to which the Texans would not have submitted; he did not hasten it because the Mexican troops that precipitated the revolution were already in the country when he returned from his long detention in Mexico; what he did do was to prepare the people in some degree to meet the inevitable, approaching danger. The clash of arms necessitated the organization of a provisional government in Texas, and by Austin's influence it issued a declaration on November 7, 1835, in favor of the Mexican constitution of 1824. Probably loyalty to Mexico not less than expediency for Texas dictated this measure. There is grave doubt whether at that time the majority of the Texans would have acquiesced in a declaration of independence, and moreover, many Mexican Republicans were opposed to Santa Anna's centralization of the government and a declaration such as that of November 7 might draw their support to Texas; if they won, and succeeded in maintaining a republican government, the Texans would be content. During the winter, however, it became increasingly evident that help was not to be expected from the Mexican Liberals; the public tone hardened; and Austin, with William H. Wharton and Branch T. Archer, was sent to the United States to negotiate a loan and solicit assistance. At New Orleans he found capitalists unwilling to advance money unless Texas would declare independence. The declaration of November 7 had failed to bring Mexican support, and repelled the Americans. The time had clearly arrived to sever Texas in its own interest from the Mexican system, and from January, 1836, until March 2 Austin was one of the most outspoken advocates of independence.